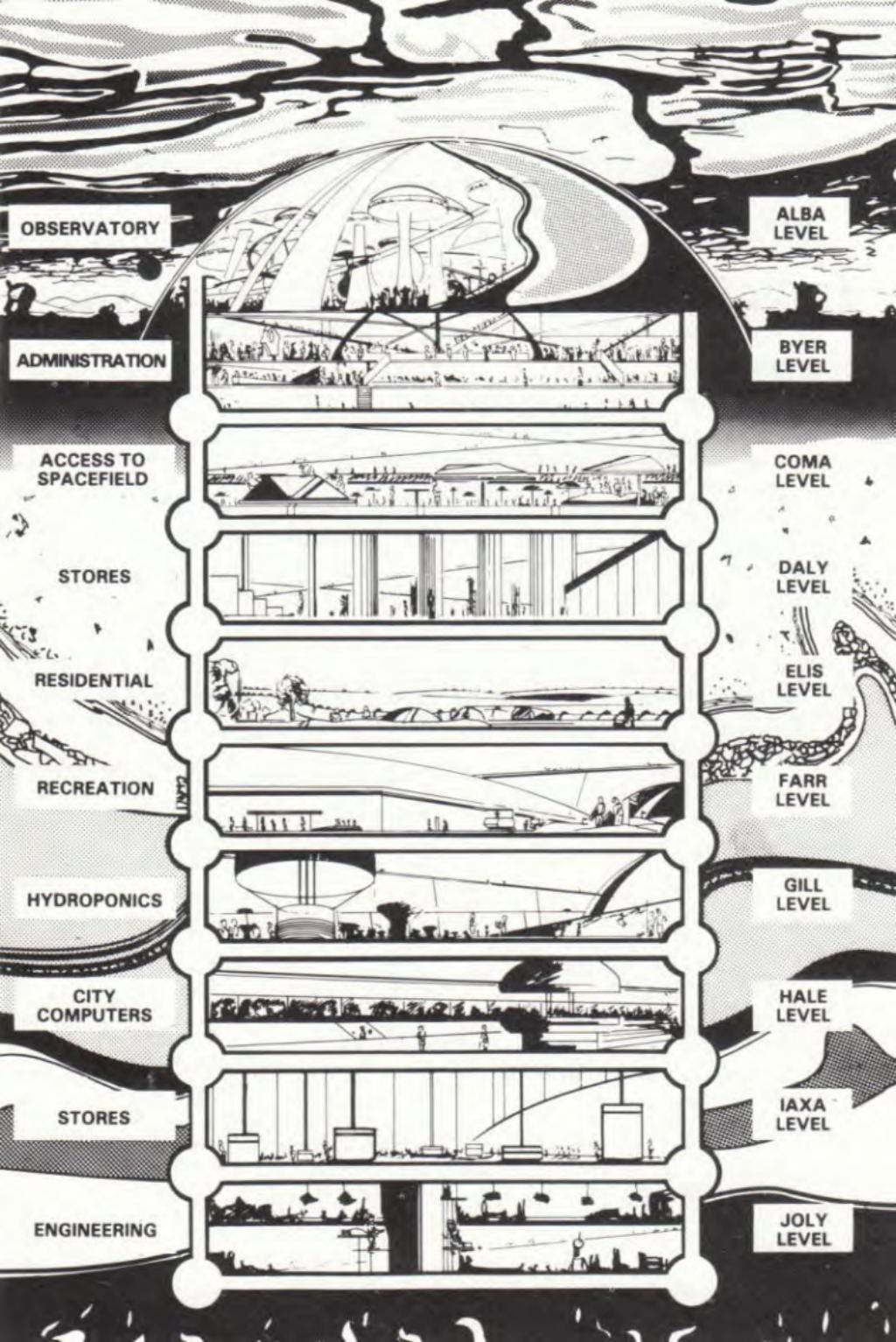


MARSPO



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The Story so far...

The year is 2494. For seventy years, the Earth has been under siege by the Sept, a hive-culture race from the Galactic centre. Since the siege began, the Sept have been kept at bay by a huge sphere of force, which surrounds both the Earth and the Moon.

Following the loss of Calcutta, it is obvious that the Sept will shortly have the capability to breach the sphere unless the force field can be strengthened according to the instructions contained in the original plans.

Unfortunately, these plans are thought to be hidden somewhere amongst the City Computers of Marsport, beneath the great Elysium Dome on Mars. Evacuated shortly before the start of the Siege, it is now occupied by Sept of the Warrior and the Warlord castes as a command post. It is also known that the main control computer of Marsport, M-Central, has spent the last seventy years incorporating its own deterrents into the city architecture, making the recovery of the sphere plans highly improbable.

However, to this end, Commander John Marsh, of the underground Terran liberation organisation, HASP, now stands in Marsport, on Level C, at the exit of the access tube to the Space Field, in the belief that a determined man can sometimes achieve more than an army...

How Marsport Works

The Option Screen is presented at the start of the game or when Commander Marsh is unfortunate enough to be killed; it can also be accessed during the game via a keyboard request. The screen offers the following choices:

1. Enter the Game
2. Save the current Game
3. Restore a Game
4. Demo Mode

Note that returning to the option screen from a current game will leave the game-world intact—upon re-entry, nothing will have changed unless a previously saved game has been restored. This allows a game to be saved at a critical point without destroying it. If you wish the option of restarting the game with all objects in their original positions, save a version immediately after loading the game.

When saving or restoring a game a version number will be asked for—this is to ensure that the right game is restored, so keep a note of version numbers.

The Keyboard controls the actions of the main character—which keys perform which actions on your particular make of computer are given on a separate card.

The following actions may be performed:

- walk left or right
- change camera angle 90 degrees left or right; this is necessary if you wish to turn a corner or view the other side of the road
- enter a doorway; to achieve this on any computer, position Commander Marsh in front of the door and press the enter button
- pick up or drop a specific object; note that objects may only be dropped in certain places—i.e. Lockers, Factor Units, Key Stations, etc.—a full list is given in a later section

- select an object being carried for dropping, etc. – the currently selected object is indicated by an asterisk
Note that Commander Marsh can carry 3 separate objects at any one time.
- fire a Power Weapon, if one is being carried and it is charged
In addition, there are some special function keys available while in the game:
 - enter/exit Autorun mode
 - freeze/unfreeze frame
 - return to Option screen

How to play Marsport

Although Marsport is a real-time adventure, it can be considered as consisting of three distinct objectives:

- locate the M-Central computer; Marsport is a 3-dimensional city, where levels are connected by express tube, which will take you up or down, but probably not both. In addition, many sections of the city cannot be reached until specific problems have been solved
- gain access to Muller's original Sphere plans, held in M-Central's inner sanctum. This will require re-exploration of Marsport for you will find many parts of the city previously unreachable now open to you
- leave the city of Marsport with the plans intact, which may prove the hardest task of all...

There follows a list of some of the beings and city elements you will encounter as you explore Marsport:

ALIENS are all hostile and deadly to Mankind; you can fight them or run away from them, but you can't ignore them!

ROBOTS have been deployed by M-Central to assist it in guarding the plans – some are harmless information gatherers, some are warden robots that may mistake you for the Sept...

SUPPLY units are the prime source of objects in the game and are continuously replenished.

LOCKERS can be used for storing objects once they are gained.

REFUSE units can be used to dispose of unwanted objects.

CHARGE units are a source of power.

FACTOR units will assemble two or more objects to manufacture a new object.

Note that components of a factoring process are all logically linked so that random attempts at manufacturing objects should be unnecessary; note also that an assembly will not complete while there is an irrelevant object present in the factor unit.

KEY stations will normally require the insertion of a key object to release a nearby wall unit or door. However, note that not all locked doors and units can be opened in this manner – some may require a more active or remote solution...

VIDTEX units provide 'useful' information which is displayed on the large video screen in the status area.

Other wall units are the resting place of M-Central's remote Servorobots and should be approached with care.

Playing Suggestions

1. Map the game carefully – the playing area is vast and the 3-dimensional nature of the city will quickly disorient you.
2. Get a weapon – combat can be avoided but a little aggression will make progress easier, and reduce tension!
3. Examine problem situations carefully; often what is required for a solution will need to be assembled from other objects. All problem situations contain clues to the solution – trial and error methods will normally be fatal!
4. Save the Game regularly – the Save and Restore features take less than a minute!

Extracts from Brewster's "A Concise Dictionary of Galactic Man", 27th Edition.

Marsport, märz'pórt, n.,

Main Spaceport of the Terran Home Worlds, prior to the Siege.

Construction commenced 2150, as a joint project between CUE and a non-governmental agency representing various Corporate Interests. The first phase consisted of the erection of a Craig dome in the Plain of Elysium, pressurisation and the creation of a local gravity well to Earth – normal standard. The following year, work commenced on phase 2, which consisted of the excavation of the top six levels, A to F, and the five-mile expresstube link to the Space Fields and Launch pads, entering at level C. Construction of the residential and recreation levels was completed by 2158, when Marsport became the temporary home for 200,000 colonists, prior to their departure on the Clipper fleet in 2160.

From 2200, engineers began the excavation of the lower 4 levels, G to J, and it was during this period that the two parts of the Artifact were found. While its true use remained a mystery, its resemblance to a crown produced the fanciful nickname of the Star Lords for its long-dead creators.

It took over forty years to construct the lower levels, driven through the hard Martian bedrock; the third phase was finally completed in 2243, when the City Computers were installed. As an inaugural celebration, each Level of Marsport was named after a feature of the Martian landscape.

During the next hundred and twenty years, Marsport became the spring-board for all of Mankind's aspirations and the city grew accordingly. In 2373, the brilliant young physicist, Doctor Heinrich Muller, became City Controller and built and installed the giant semi-willed computer, M-Central, as main City Monitor, and the development of Marsport was complete.

Over the next fifty years, during the Great Retreat, the city became a refugee centre as colony after colony was evacuated, until, following the Sack of Mars in 2424, Marsport itself was abandoned and left to the Sept. It is thought that, before his death, Muller convinced M-Central that it should take steps to defend itself and,

as a result, it prepared such a series of traps and deterrents that the Sept had not penetrated to the main City Computers by the time the final destruction of Marsport in 2494 lit the startled night-sky of an Earth under Siege.

Sept, sept, n.,

From first contact in 2376, the Sept never failed to show anything other than unremitting hostility towards Mankind; consequently, information concerning Sept social orders is, at best, sketchy. However, from the few Sept prisoners that were interrogated before they suicided, the following picture has been constructed.

The Sept society can be thought of as operating like a huge hive, where each individual has clearly-defined functions and obligations to the Home Swarm (the analogy cannot be pushed too far, for, although examination of Sept body-cases shows traces of vestigial wings, no living Sept has been seen to fly).

The human-given name of Sept originates in the fact that there appears to be seven distinct classes or castes—Warriors, Warlords, Scientists, Workers, Mid-wives, Concubines and Emperor. However, members of each caste are considered equally important to Swarm, only the Imperial Throne is given any precedence or deference.

Members of the fighting castes are aggressive and have heavily armoured body-cases; it is apparent that Warlords must possess some degree of telepathic link with the Warriors in their own brigades. Scientists, Workers and Mid-wives constitute the majority of the Swarm population and are normally imported to new planets shortly after investiture—the absence of these castes on Marsport indicates the amount of trouble that M-Central must have caused the Sept.

The Imperial classes are found only on the Sept homeworld of Gath, for all castes are fanatical in the preservation of the Soul of the Swarm, that is, the Emperor himself—it is noteworthy that the current occupant of the Imperial Throne is only the second in Sept recorded history. Because of this over-riding compulsion for Swarm survival, the Sept remain deeply hostile to all other races and, even today the location of Gath is known to only a handful of outsiders.

A TERRAN TIMELINE: 2000 AD to 2500 AD taken from "A Concise History of the First Empire of Man" by Ellis and Klay.

Year

2033 China signs Mutual Benefit Pact with America.

2057 The False War. Hawaii destroyed by a thermo-nuclear device planted by Chinese Separatists. Number of casualties: 1,000,000.

2080 Sino-Russian Alliance formed; East-West tension increases to breaking point.

2094 Professor Charles Craig creates an impermeable force-field using Unified Mechanics Theory, and immediately publishes his results.

2098 Nationwide Craig-effect force domes are erected by America, the Sino-Russian Alliance and the Union of Europe; smaller domes appear in the Middle-East, Australia and parts of Africa.

2099 The Third Global War, also known as the Five Hour War. Massive space-launched exchange of East-West nuclear warheads is absorbed harmlessly by the national Craig domes. Number of casualties: none.

2100 Unopposed formation of the Council of United Earth.

2115 Desmond and Anderson develop the Craig effect to produce a reactionless Faster-than-Light drive.

2128 Scientific settlements on Mars and Circe in the Asteroid Belt apply for independent membership of CUE and are accepted.

2132 First CUE colonisation program; ten DAC-drive ships are sent to explore the local star systems.

2134 Last of the search ships return; no ship ventured further than two light years from Earth due to inadequacies in the mass-conversion engines that feed the main drives.

2145 Second CUE colonisation program; one hundred enhanced DAC-drive scout ships are launched.

2148 Scout ships begin to return, with news of habitable planets circling Sirius, Procyon and Alpha Centauri.

2150 Construction of Marsport begun, as primary home System spaceport.

2160 Third CUE Colonisation program; twenty interstellar Clipper class ships, each carrying 4000 colonists, launched from Marsport.

2185 Fourteen colonies established and thriving; four Clippers returned to Earth, two Clippers lost – reasons unknown.

2201 During excavation of lower levels of Marsport, an Artifact of unknown use is found; carbon tests date it as 2 million years old.

2239 Interstellar communication becomes virtually instantaneous because of invention of DAC Beam, using an FTL Craig-effect carrier wave.

2298 Colonies on Alpha Centauri, Tau Ceti and Procyon lobby for independence from CUE.

2341 CUE council cedes and steps down in favour of council representing all the Home System Worlds together with the fourteen original colonies; the new federation is given the grandiose title of the Galactic Empire of Man.

2350 Alpha Centauri established as staging GEM space port.

2375 First GEM colonisation program; ten Clippers, plus more than fifty support vessels, launched from Alpha Centauri in direction of Galactic centre.

2376 GEM fleet encounters lone unidentified alien vessel while investigating the Beta Crucis system. Alien refuses to acknowledge and, as it is approached by a GEM scout ship, the entire fleet is destroyed.

2383 Following several further disastrous contacts, an alien is captured and identified as belonging to a hive culture called the Sept.

2405 GEM colony at Barnards Star is obliterated by Sept forces. Colonies at Formalhaut and Pollux evacuated.

2406 Council orders construction of Craig field generator on Moon to completely encompass Earth-Moon pair; power consumption is so vast that it is fuelled by a permanent mining operation 3 miles below the Lunar surface. The entire project is directed by Doctor Heinrich Muller, a physicist and City Controller of Marsport.

2420 Battle of Sirius; combined GEM navies routed and 80 per cent destroyed by massive Sept task force. Remaining colonies begin evacuation to Home System.

2424 All GEM forces contained within Earth-Moon Craig sphere. Marsport occupied by the Sept; Doctor Muller is killed defending the City Computers.

The Siege of Earth begins.

2440 Concerted attempts by the Sept to penetrate Craig sphere fail; GEM council dissolved – the Committee for the Preservation of Earth is formed.

2446 John Kepler Marsh is born at the Lunar Field Maintenance Depot in the Mare Imbrium.

2478 The Appeasement Party put forward a 20 point surrender proposal for the Committee's approval; a minority group, the Humans Against the Sept Party is banned and continues operations underground.

2485 An emissary sent through the sphere to the Sept Warlord at Marsport does not return; John Marsh joins HASP.

2491 The Sept breach the Craig sphere for 4 seconds; the Calcutta conurbation is destroyed. Number of casualties: 17,000,000.

2493 It is recognised that the Sept are close to developing a method to disrupt the Craig effect; Commander John Marsh is sent by HASP to recover Muller's original sphere plans from Marsport.

2494 Marsh discovers a second Artifact; Marsport is destroyed.

2495 The Craig sphere is strengthened according to Muller's plans; HASP delegates are admitted to Committee sessions.

2499 A second secret Appeasement mission to the Sept is returned tortured and dead to Earth.

2500 The Committee is dissolved; the GEM council is reformed under the Premiership of John Marsh.

The Siege of Earth continues; the Fight-Back has begun.

Bibliography

If you have enjoyed Marsport, you may wish to read the following books, which also exploit the idea of a Future History:

The Known Space Series by Larry Niven.

The Foundation Trilogy by Isaac Asimov.

The Cities in Flight series by James Blish.

The Dorsai stories by Gordon Dickson.

Acknowledgements

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